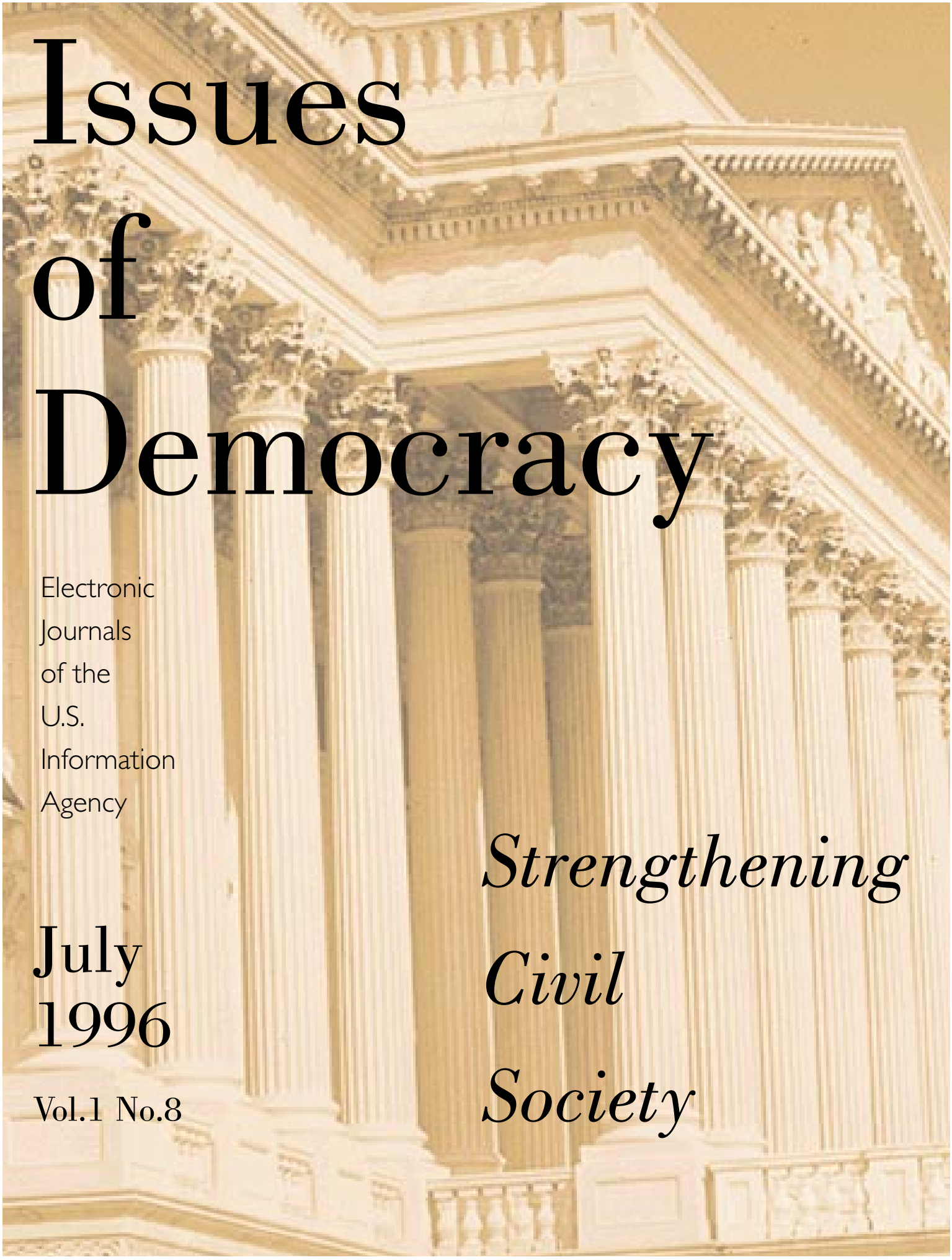

# Issues of Democracy

Electronic Journals of the U.S. Information Agency

## *Strengthening Civil Society*

July 1996

Vol.1 No.8

# From the Editors

## *Strengthening Civil Society*

Our theme for this issue is civil society, the voluntary engagement of citizens in their government and their communities. America's leaders have always encouraged citizens to be politically involved and to volunteer their services on behalf of their neighbors and country.

Many Americans vividly recall President John F. Kennedy's famous admonition—"Ask not what your country can do for you; ask what you can do for your country"—and the Peace Corps program he founded. President George Bush recognized exemplary acts of selfless civic action with his "Thousand Points of Light" program. President Bill Clinton, who established a program of national service (Americorps), has repeatedly urged

young Americans to get involved in their communities. Speaking to graduating students at Pennsylvania State University in May, he said, "With this wonderful precious commodity of a fine education, I hope you will find some way to give back some of what your country has given to you. No matter what you do or how busy you are, there is always a way to serve a larger community."

In this issue we examine contemporary civil society from several perspectives. Robert D. Putnam argues that Americans are no longer as committed to civic action as they once were. Seymour Martin Lipset takes issue with this finding, asserting that Americans remain more active in voluntary associations and more willing to contribute to nongovernmental organizations than citizens of any other country. For an international perspective, Miguel Darcy de Oliveira and Rajesh Tandon report on the amazing proliferation of citizen action groups worldwide; and Randa Slim outlines a method that sustains deliberative forums in many countries, especially in the emerging democracies. Albert Shanker stresses the need for civic education in the building of democracy, and Paul Malamud reports on a relatively new phenomenon, civic journalism.

Our own U.S. Information Agency has been involved in the creation of CIVITAS, an international network of educators aimed at strengthening citizenship and civic culture. Launched last year at a conference in Prague, CIVITAS is planning another major conference this year. "CIVITAS Panamericano: Education Democracy" will be held September 29–October 2, in Buenos Aires, Argentina.[1] CIVITAS is one of many movements worldwide that involve a broad range of committed individuals and organizations dedicated to making the world a more civil and democratic place in which to live.

Civnet, the World Wide Web site for CIVITAS, can be found at: *http://civnet.org/index.html.*

FOOTNOTE

1. For further information, contact Dr. Jerome Oetgen of the CIVITAS Panamericano Conference Secretariat on 202/619-5185 in Washington, D.C. ; e-mail: *joetgen@usia.gov*

Issues of Democracy

Electronic Journals of the U.S. Information Agency

# Contents

## *Strengthening Civil Society*

### FOCUS

*Americans have a long tradition, rooted in the founding of their republic, of examining and debating the course of U.S. society. The debate intensified recently in the wake of Harvard University professor Robert D. Putnam's assertions that a "continuing erosion of civic engagement" poses a threat to democratic institutions. Among the many distinguished scholars who have responded to Putnam's views is Seymour Martin Lipset, who asserts that civic institutions are robust and "the American dream is still alive."*



### GLOBAL PERSPECTIVES

## REPORTS



## DEPARTMENTS



# Issues of Democracy

Electronic Journals of the U.S. Information Agency

Vol.1 No.8

Bureau of Information
U.S. Information Agency

ejdemos@usia.gov

July 1996



USIA's electronic journals, published and transmitted worldwide at two-week intervals, examine major issues facing the United States and the International Community. The journals—*Economic Perspectives, Global Issues, Issues of Democracy, U.S. Foreign Policy Agenda,* and *U.S. Society & Values*—provide analysis, commentary, and background information in their thematic areas. French and Spanish language versions appear one week after the English. The opinions expressed in the journals do not necessarily reflect the views or policies of the U.S. Government. Articles may be reproduced and translated outside the United States unless there are copyright restrictions cited somewhere on the articles. ✲ Current or back issues of the journals can be found on the U.S. Information Service (USIS) Home Page on the World Wide Web at "http://www.usia.gov/journals/journals.htm." They are available in several electronic formats to facilitate viewing on-line, transferring, downloading, and printing. Comments are welcome at your local USIS post or at the editorial offices: Editor, *Issues of Democracy* (I/TDHR), U.S. Information Agency, 301 4th Street, S.W., Washington, D.C. 20547, United States of America.

# Bowling Alone: America's Declining Social Capital

*by*

*Robert D. Putnam*

Robert D. Putnam, Dillion Professor of International Affairs at Harvard University, describes decreasing participation in U.S. civic organizations and suggests reasons for this trend. Since its initial publication in the *Journal of Democracy,* this article—presented in abridgement here—has stirred a vigorous public debate and made "bowling alone" a metaphor for contemporary life in America. In the article that follows this one, scholar Seymour Martin Lipset takes issue with many of Putnam's conclusions.



Many students of the new democracies that have emerged over the past decade-and-a-half have emphasized the importance of a strong and active civil society to the consolidation of democracy. Especially with regard to the postcommunist countries, scholars and democratic activists alike have lamented the absence or obliteration of traditions of independent civic engagement and a widespread tendency toward passive reliance on the state. To those concerned with the weakness of civil societies in the developing or postcommunist world, the advanced Western democracies, and above all the United States, have typically been taken as models to be emulated. There is striking evidence, however, that the vibrancy of American civil society has notably declined over the past several decades.

Ever since the publication of Alexis de Tocqueville's *Democracy in America*, the United States has played a central role in systematic studies of the links between

democracy and civil society. Although this is in part because trends in American life are often regarded as harbingers of social modernization, it is also because America has traditionally been considered unusually "civic."

When Tocqueville visited the United States in the 1830s, it was the Americans' propensity for civic association that most impressed him as the key to their unprecedented ability to make democracy work. "Americans of all ages, all stations in life, and all types of disposition," he observed, "are forever forming associations. There are not only commercial and industrial associations in which all take part, but others of a thousand different types—religious, moral, serious, futile, very general and very limited, immensely large and very minute…. Nothing, in my view, deserves more attention than the intellectual and moral associations in America."

Recently, American social scientists of a neo-Tocquevillean bent have unearthed a wide range of empirical evidence that the quality of public life and the performance of social institutions (and not only in America) are indeed powerfully influenced by norms and networks of civic engagement. Researchers in such fields as education, urban poverty, unemployment, the control of crime and drug abuse, and even health have discovered that successful outcomes are more likely in civically engaged communities. Similarly, research on the varying economic attainments of different ethnic groups in the United States has demonstrated the importance of social bonds within each group. These results are consistent with research in a wide range of settings that demonstrates the vital importance of social networks for job placement and many other economic outcomes.

No doubt the mechanisms through which civic engagement and social connectedness produce such results as better schools, faster economic development, lower crime, and more effective government are multiple and complex. While these briefly recounted findings require further confirmation and perhaps qualification, the parallels across hundreds of empirical studies in a dozen disparate disciplines and subfields are striking. Social scientists in several fields have recently suggested a common framework for understanding these phenomena, a framework that rests on the concept of social capital. By analogy with notions of physical capital and human capital—tools and training that enhance individual productivity—"social capital" refers to features of social organization such as networks, norms, and social trust that facilitate coordination and cooperation for mutual benefit.

I do not intend here to survey (much less contribute to) the development of the theory of social capital. Instead, I use the central premise of that rapidly growing body of work—that social connections and civic engagement pervasively influence our public life, as well as our private prospects—as the starting point for an empirical survey of trends in social capital in contemporary America. I concentrate here entirely on the American case, although the developments I portray may in some measure characterize many contemporary societies.

## Whatever Happened to Civic Engagement?

We begin with familiar evidence on changing patterns of political participation.

Consider the well-known decline in turnout in national elections over the last three decades. From a relative high point in the early 1960s, voter turnout had by 1990 declined by nearly a quarter; tens of millions of Americans had forsaken their parents' habitual readiness to engage in the simplest act of citizenship.

It is not just the voting booth that has been increasingly deserted by Americans. A series of identical questions posed by the Roper Organization to national samples ten times each year over the last two decades reveals that since 1973 the number of Americans who report that "in the past year" they have "attended a public meeting on town or school affairs" has fallen by more than a third (from 22 percent in 1973 to 13 percent in 1993). Similar (or even greater) relative declines are evident in responses to questions about attending a political rally or speech, serving on a committee of some local organization, and working for a political party. By almost every measure, Americans' direct engagement in politics and government has fallen steadily and sharply over the last generation, despite the fact that average levels of education—the best individual-level predictor of political participation—have risen sharply throughout this period.

Not coincidentally, Americans have also disengaged psychologically from politics and government over this era. The proportion of Americans who reply that they "trust the government in Washington" only "some of the time" or "almost never" has risen steadily from 30 percent in 1966 to 75 percent in 1992.

Our survey of organizational membership among Americans can usefully begin with a glance at the aggregate results of the General Social Survey, a scientifically conducted, national-sample survey that has been repeated 14 times over the last two decades. Church-related groups constitute the most common type of organization joined by Americans; they are especially popular with women. Other types of organizations frequently joined by women include school-service groups (mostly parent-teacher associations) sports groups, professional societies, and literary societies. Among men, sports clubs, labor unions, professional societies, fraternal groups, veterans' groups, and service clubs are all relatively popular

Religious affiliation is by far the most common associational membership among Americans. Indeed, by many measures America continues to be (even more than in Tocqueville's time) an astonishingly "churched" society. For example, the United States has more houses of worship per capita than any other nation on earth. Yet religious sentiment in America seems to be becoming somewhat less tied to institutions and more self-defined.

How have these complex crosscurrents played out over the past three or four decades in terms of Americans' engagement with organized religion? The general pattern is clear: The 1960s witnessed a significant drop in reported weekly churchgoing—from roughly 48 percent in the late 1950s to roughly 41 percent in the early 1970s. Since then, it has stagnated or (according to some surveys) declined still further. Meanwhile, data from the General Social Survey show a modest decline in membership in all "church-related groups" over the past 20 years. It would seem, then, that net participation by Americans, both in religious services and in church-related groups, has declined

modestly (by perhaps a sixth) since the 1960s.

For many years, labor unions provided one of the most common organizational affiliations among American workers. Yet union membership has been falling for nearly four decades, with the steepest decline occurring between 1975 and 1985.

The parent-teacher association (PTA) has been an especially important form of civic engagement in twentieth-century America because parental involvement in the educational process represents a particularly productive form of social capital. It is, therefore, dismaying to discover that participation in parent-teacher organizations has dropped drastically over the last generation, from more than twelve million in 1964 to barely five million in 1982 before recovering to approximately seven million now.

Next, we turn to evidence on membership in (and volunteering for) civic and fraternal organizations. These data show some striking patterns. First, membership in traditional women's groups has declined more or less steadily since the mid-1960s. Similar reductions are apparent in the numbers of volunteers for mainline civic organizations, such as the Boy Scouts (off by 26 percent since 1970) and the Red Cross (off by 61 percent since 1970). Fraternal organizations have also witnessed a substantial drop in membership during the 1980s and 1990s.

The most whimsical yet discomfiting bit of evidence of social disengagement in contemporary America that I have discovered is this: More Americans are bowling today than ever before, but bowling in organized leagues has plummeted in the past decade or so. Between 1980 and 1993 the total number of bowlers in America increased by ten percent, while league bowling decreased by 40 percent. The rise of solo bowling threatens the livelihood of bowling-lane proprietors because those who bowl as members of leagues consume three times as much beer and pizza as solo bowlers, and the money in bowling is in the beer and pizza, not the balls and shoes. The broader social significance, however, lies in the social interaction and even occasionally civic conversations over beer and pizza that solo bowlers forgo. Whether or not bowling beats balloting in the eyes of most Americans, bowling teams illustrate yet another vanishing form of social capital.

## Countertrends

At this point, however, we must confront a serious counterargument. Perhaps the traditional forms of civic organization whose decay we have been tracing have been replaced by vibrant new organizations. For example, national environmental organizations (like the Sierra Club) and feminist groups (like the National Organization for Women) grew rapidly during the 1970s and 1980s and now count hundreds of thousands of dues-paying members. An even more dramatic example is the American Association of Retired Persons (AARP), which grew exponentially from 400,000 card-carrying members in 1960 to 33 million in 1993, becoming (after the Catholic Church) the largest private organization in the world. The national administrators of these organizations are among the most feared lobbyists in Washington, in large part because of their massive mailing lists of presumably loyal members.

These new mass-membership organizations are plainly of great political impor-

tance. From the point of view of social connectedness, however, they are sufficiently different from classic "secondary associations" that we need to invent a new label—perhaps "tertiary associations." For the vast majority of their members, the only act of membership consists in writing a check for dues or perhaps occasionally reading a newsletter. Few ever attend any meetings of such organizations, and most are unlikely ever (knowingly) to encounter any other member. The bond between any two members of the Sierra Club is less like the bond between any two members of a gardening club and more like the bond between any two fans [of the same sports team] (or perhaps any two devoted Honda owners): they root for the same team and they share some of the same interests, but they are unaware of each other's existence. Their ties, in short, are to common symbols, common leaders, and perhaps common ideals, but not to one another. The theory of social capital argues that associational membership should, for example, increase social trust, but this prediction is much less straightforward with regard to membership in tertiary associations. From the point of view of social connectedness, the Environmental Defense Fund and a bowling league are just not in the same category.

If the growth of tertiary organizations represents one potential (but probably not real) counterexample to my thesis, a second countertrend is represented by the growing prominence of nonprofit organizations, especially nonprofit service agencies. This so-called third sector includes everything from Oxfam and the Metropolitan Museum of Art to the Ford Foundation and the Mayo Clinic. In other words, although most secondary associations are nonprofits, most nonprofit agencies are not secondary associations. To identify trends in the size of the nonprofit sector with trends in social connectedness would be another fundamental conceptual mistake.

A third potential countertrend is much more relevant to an assessment of social capital and civic engagement. Some able researchers have argued that the past few decades have witnessed a rapid expansion in "support groups" of various sorts. Robert Wuthnow reports that fully 40 percent of all Americans claim to be "currently involved in [a] small group that meets regularly and provides support or caring for those who participate in it." Many of these groups are religiously affiliated, but many others are not. For example, nearly five percent of Wuthnow's national sample claim to participate regularly in a "self-help" group, such as Alcoholics Anonymous, and nearly as many say they belong to book-discussion groups and hobby clubs.

The groups described by Wuthnow's respondents unquestionably represent an important form of social capital, and they need to be accounted for in any serious reckoning of trends in social connectedness. On the other hand, they do not typically play the same role as traditional civic associations. Some small groups merely provide occasions for individuals to focus on themselves in the presence of others. The social contract binding members together asserts only the weakest of obligations. Come if you have time. Talk if you feel like it….

All three of these potential countertrends—tertiary organizations, nonprofit organizations, and support groups—need somehow to be weighed against the erosion

of conventional civic organizations. One way of doing so is to consult the General Social Survey.

[It shows that] at all educational (and hence social) levels of American society, and counting all sorts of group memberships, the average number of associational memberships has fallen by about a fourth over the past quarter-century. The available survey evidence confirms our earlier conclusion: American social capital in the form of civic associations has significantly eroded over the past generation.

## Good Neighborliness and Social Trust

I noted earlier that most readily available quantitative evidence on trends in social connectedness involves formal settings, such as the voting booth, the union hall, or the PTA. One glaring exception is so widely discussed as to require little comment here: The most fundamental form of social capital is the family, and the massive evidence of the loosening of bonds within the family (both extended and nuclear) is well known. This trend, of course, is quite consistent with—and may help to explain—our theme of social decapitalization.

A second aspect of informal social capital on which we happen to have reasonably reliable time-series data involves neighborliness. In each General Social Survey since 1974 respondents have been asked, "How often do you spend a social evening with a neighbor?" The proportion of Americans who socialize with their neighbors more than once a year has slowly but steadily declined over the past two decades, from 72 percent in 1974 to 61 percent in 1993. (On the other hand, socializing with "friends who do not live in your neighborhood" appears to be on the increase, a trend that may reflect the growth of workplace-based social connections.)

Americans are also less trusting. The proportion of Americans saying that most people can be trusted fell by more than a third between 1960, when 58 percent chose that alternative, and 1993, when only 37 percent did. The same trend is apparent in all educational groups.

Our discussion of trends in social connectedness and civic engagement has tacitly assumed that all the forms of social capital that we have discussed are themselves coherently correlated across individuals. This is in fact true. Members of associations are much more likely than non-members to participate in politics, to spend time with neighbors, to express social trust, and so on.

## Why Is U.S. Social Capital Eroding?

As we have seen, something has happened in America in the past two or three decades to diminish civic engagement and social connectedness. What could that "something" be? Here are several possible explanations, along with some initial evidence on each.

**The movement of women into the labor force.** Over these same two or three decades, many millions of American women have moved out of the home into paid employment. This is the primary, though not the sole, reason why the weekly working hours of the average American have increased significantly during these years. It seems highly plausible that this social revolution should have reduced the time and energy available for building social capital. The sharpest decline in

women's civic participation seems to have come in the 1970s; membership in "women's" organizations has been virtually halved since the late 1960s. By contrast, most of the decline in participation in men's organizations occurred about ten years later; the total decline to date has been approximately 25 percent for the typical organization. On the other hand, the survey data imply that the aggregate declines for men are virtually as great as those for women.

**Mobility: The "repotting" hypothesis.** Numerous studies of organizational involvement have shown that residential stability and such related phenomena as home-ownership are clearly associated with greater civic engagement. Mobility, like frequent re-potting of plants, tends to disrupt root systems, and it takes time for an uprooted individual to put down new roots. It seems plausible that the automobile, suburbanization, and the movement to the Sun Belt have reduced the social rootedness of the average American, but one fundamental difficulty with this hypothesis is apparent: The best evidence shows that residential stability and home-ownership in America have risen modestly since 1965, and are surely higher now than during the 1950s, when civic engagement and social connectedness by our measures was definitely higher.

**Other demographic transformations.** A range of additional changes has transformed the American family since the 1960s—fewer marriages, more divorces, fewer children, lower real wages, and so on. Each of these changes might account for some of the slackening of civic engagement, since married, middle-class parents are generally more socially involved than other people. Moreover, the changes in scale that have swept over the American economy in these years—illustrated by the replacement of the corner grocery by the supermarket and now perhaps of the supermarket by electronic shopping at home, or the replacement of community-based enterprises by outposts of distant multinational firms—may perhaps have undermined the material and even physical basis for civic engagement.

**The technological transformation of leisure.** There is reason to believe that deep-seated technological trends are radically "privatizing" or "individualizing" our use of leisure time and thus disrupting many opportunities for social-capital formation. The most obvious and probably the most powerful instrument of this revolution is television. Time-budget studies in the 1960s showed that the growth in time spent watching television dwarfed all other changes in the way Americans passed their days and nights. Television has made our communities (or, rather, what we experience as our communities) wider and shallower. In the language of economics, electronic technology enables individual tastes to be satisfied more fully, but at the cost of the positive social externalities associated with more primitive forms of entertainment.

Is technology thus driving a wedge between our individual interests and our collective interests? It is a question that seems worth exploring more systematically.

## What Is to Be Done?

The last refuge of a social-scientific scoundrel is to call for more research. Nevertheless, I cannot forbear from

suggesting [that] further lines of inquiry [be undertaken].

The concept of "civil society" has played a central role in the recent global debate about the preconditions for democracy and democratization. In the newer democracies this phrase has properly focused attention on the need to foster a vibrant civic life in soils traditionally inhospitable to self-government. In the established democracies, ironically, growing numbers of citizens are questioning the effectiveness of their public institutions at the very moment when liberal democracy has swept the battlefield, both ideologically and geopolitically. In America, at least, there is reason to suspect that this democratic disarray may be linked to a broad and continuing erosion of civic engagement that began a quarter-century ago.

High on our scholarly agenda should be the question of whether a comparable erosion of social capital may be under way in other advanced democracies, perhaps in different institutional and behavioral guises. High on America's agenda should be the question of how to reverse these adverse trends in social connectedness, thus restoring civic engagement and civic trust.

The unabridged version of this article can be found at: *http://muse.jhu.edu/journals/journal_of_democracy/v006/putnam.html*

Issues of Democracy, USIA Electronic Journals, Vol. 1, No. 8, July 1996

# Malaise and Resiliency

*by*

*Seymour Martin Lipset*

Social scientist Seymour Martin Lipset says that Americans remain more active in voluntary associations and more willing to contribute to nongovernmental organizations than citizens of any other country. Lipset, whose scholarship has shaped the study of the conditions, values, and institutions of democracy in the United States and throughout the world, asserts that Americans are still the strongest exponents of the independent sector, despite notable signs of political disengagement. The following has been excerpted from an article of the same title that appeared in the July 1995 issue of *Journal of Democracy.*



Harvard political scientist Robert Putnam contends that the traditional networks that have brought together Americans with common views and interests, helping to sustain political parties and political participation, have lost strength over the past few decades.

While the positing of a relationship between declining levels of associational membership and the fall-off in political participation is logical, a close look at the evidence suggests that civil society remains relatively healthy in the United States. Comparative survey data, for example, still confirm Tocqueville's conclusion that Americans are more civically engaged than most other people in the world. According to the World Values Survey of 1990, the United States has considerably higher rates of membership in voluntary organizations than any other nation. Eighty-two percent of Americans belong to at least one of 16 types of voluntary organizations, as compared to 53 percent

of Germans, 39 percent of the French, 36 percent of Italians, and 36 percent of the Japanese. Moreover, Americans have the highest rates of membership in almost all of the 16 types of organizations, with trade unions being the main exception. With regard to charitable or social-service activities, 49 percent of Americans reported volunteering in 1990-1991, as compared to 13 percent of Germans and 19 percent of the French. A higher percentage of Americans—73 percent—contributed money to such causes, as compared to 43 to 44 percent of the French and Germans; American contributors also gave much more per capita. The proportion of the adult population in the United States that volunteers for community-service activities climbed in Gallup polls from 27 percent in 1977 to 54 percent in 1989, before falling to 46 percent in 1994.

### Religious and Informal Groups

Americans are clearly the most religiously committed people in Christendom, with the exception of a few countries like Ireland and Poland, where religion and nationalism are intertwined. But there is conflicting information about trends. With regard to membership in church-affiliated groups, the National Opinion Research Center (NORC) reports a drop from 42 percent in 1974 to 35 percent in 1993, with the greatest part of the decline occurring in the late 1970s. Gallup, on the other hand, reports that membership in churches and synagogues has remained steady at about two-thirds, and that the rate of weekly church attendance has fluctuated only slightly, with the figures for 1994 (38 percent) almost identical to those for 1950 (39 percent) and 1987 (40 percent).

Between 1974 and 1993, NORC regularly inquired about the interpersonal relations of Americans using three different questions concerning frequency of visits with relatives, neighbors, and friends. The percentage of Americans reporting that they visited with neighbors "daily to several times a month" decreased from 44 percent in 1974 to 33.5 percent in 1993. During the same interval, the percentage "spending time regularly with relatives" fell much less, from 57 to 52 percent; the percentage "seeing friends regularly" actually increased, from 40 to 45 percent.

Data on participation in informal groups are obviously relevant here. Robert Wuthnow's 1990 study of the informal small-groups movement, based on a Gallup poll, personal interviews, and in-depth case studies, found that 40 percent of Americans over the age of 18 participate regularly in a small group in which they find mutual caring and support. The main reasons given for joining these groups are "to gain a feeling of community" and "to find spirituality." In accordance with these groups' pragmatic focus, entry and exit requirements are minimal and few demands are made of members. Despite the flexibility of these "rules," three-fourths of the groups have existed for more than five years, and most have lasted longer. Wuthnow's conclusion is that, although these groups make participants feel good, they do not challenge members to make significant commitments to others or to the large community.

The thesis that the vitality of civil society, as reflected by the level of participation in voluntary organizations, is linked to the strength of democracy is nearly two centuries old. It implies, as Putnam suggests, that the two should move in tandem.

Much of the available evidence on trends supports Putnam's conclusion that Americans' involvement in voluntary organizations has declined. Yet there are enough data to the contrary to warrant the Scottish verdict of "not proven"—to which one would add "but probable." Clearly, more research in this area is needed.

## The Survival of the American Dream

Given the bad news about attitudes toward governance in the United States, what accounts for the continued stability of the American political system? Why are we not witnessing mass unrest or grievous forms of opposition? Why is the major protest movement—led by Ross Perot—basically centrist, even conservative with respect to economic and social policy? Part of the answer lies in the continued, though perhaps somewhat diminished, strength of American civic culture. As detailed above, volunteering for charitable causes, some types of organizational membership, and religious activities have increased or remained constant, and the United States remains ahead of other nations in its level of citizen participation in voluntary institutions. Perhaps even more important is the evidence that most Americans are not unhappy about their personal lives or prospects; in fact, they show considerable optimism about the future. They still view the United States as a country that rewards personal integrity and hard work, as a nation that—government and politics aside—still "works."

The American Dream is still alive, even if the government and other institutions are seen as corrupt and inefficient. A 1994 survey-based study conducted for the Hudson Institute found that over four-fifths of Americans, or 81 percent, agree with the statement "I am optimistic about my personal future." Three-quarters, or 74 percent, agreed with the statement "In America, if you work hard, you can be anything you want to be." Not surprisingly, when asked to choose between "having the opportunity to succeed" and "having security from failing," over three-quarters, or 76 percent, opted for the former, with only one-fifth preferring security.

A 1994 Gallup poll for Times Mirror yielded similar results. Over two-thirds of respondents, or 67 percent, said that they expected their financial situation to improve "a lot" or "some;" only 14 percent said it would get worse. Large majorities rejected the statement "Success in life is pretty much determined by forces outside our control." Most affirmed the traditional American laissez-faire ideology, with 88 percent agreeing with the statement "I admire people who get rich by working hard," and 85 percent agreeing that "poor people have become too dependent on government assistance programs." Perhaps more significant, 78 percent endorsed the view "The strength of this country today is mostly based on the success of American business."

## Income Inequality

Such views persist despite the hard evidence that income inequality is increasing and is greater in the United States than in most European nations and Japan. The explanation for this pattern may lie in America's cultural emphasis on meritocracy and upward mobility. And greater proportions, in fact, do rise into the more privileged sectors in the United States than elsewhere. Given the strength of the aspiration to do so, it is not surprising that

Americans are more disposed to approve of high salaries for "stars" in entertainment, athletics, and the market in general—that is, for achievers at every level. Comparative survey research indicates that Americans are much more approving of sizeable income differences than both Europeans and the Japanese. Support for the overall system is also reinforced by a relatively low unemployment rate—currently between five and six percent. There is certainly some unhappiness about the economy and income distribution in the United States, which reinforces other sources of political malaise, but is much less pronounced than elsewhere.

Clearly, the American political system—though distrusted and ineffective in dealing with major social problems—is in no real danger. Most Americans remain highly patriotic and religious, believe that they are living in the best society in the world, and think that their country, in spite of its problems, still offers them opportunity and good prospects for economic security. Although the effects of the Great Depression of the 1930s were worse in the United States than in most of Europe, America came out of it with its party system, state institutions, and material values intact. The polity will no doubt survive the current wave of political malaise as well.

# The Emergence of Global Civil Society

*by*

*Miguel Darcy de Oliveira and Rajesh Tandon*

Citizen-action groups are proliferating world-wide and have become valuable and important counterpoints to the power of impersonal governments and the profit-driven market, say two international observers.

*Miguel Darcy de Oliveira is the executive secretary of the Institute of Cultural Action (IDAC) in Rio de Janeiro. Currently he is chair of the Executive Committee of CIVICUS, the World Alliance for Citizen Participation. Rajesh Tandon, a CIVICUS board member, is founder and coordinator of the Society for Participatory Research in Asia (PRIA).*

*This article has been adapted from Citizens Strengthening Global Civil Society, the authors' report published by CIVICUS in 1994, and includes updated information provided by Darcy de Oliveira.*

IN THE PAST TWO DECADES, people of all classes, creeds, and ethnic backgrounds have organized themselves to defend democracy and human rights, to fight for more equitable development and a safer environment, or, more simply, just to help those in need to improve the quality of daily lives.

Such citizen action ranges from women in India hugging trees to save them from being felled, to global environmental organizations lobbying governments to come to terms with ecological imbalance. From students in Scandinavia donating the proceeds of their voluntary work for educational projects in the Third World, to the mothers of political prisoners in Argentina confronting a military dictatorship. From Polish workers challenging a totalitarian regime to entire villages in Asia mobilizing for self-governance and self-development. From medical doctors disregarding national frontiers to rescue the victims of civil strife, to millions of Americans reading for the blind, collecting money for a health charity, or doing volunteer work in the local library, art gallery, or soup kitchen. From courageous Arab women standing up for their rights, to citizens worldwide demanding safety and freedom for persecuted people whose names they can hardly pronounce and whose political beliefs they often do not share.

The sources of inspiration may be spiritual, religious, moral, or political. However, the common thread in this ever-changing quilt is to be found in the realm of values: solidarity and compassion for the fate and well-being of others, including unknown, distant others; a sense of personal responsibility and reliance on one's own initiative to do the right thing; the impulse toward altruistic giving and sharing; the refusal of inequality, violence, and oppression.

In the past, governments in many areas of the world tended to oppose civil society. The collapse of the communist regimes and of many repressive military dictatorships in Latin America and Asia, combined with the crisis of the welfare state in the North and state-promoted development in the South, has given rise to a much more open and complex political environment.

Civil society institutions may be fragile, but they are many and have been growing steadily in scope and reach during the past two decades. The breathtaking peaceful revolutions in Eastern Europe, the democratic transitions in so many countries of the South, and the dramatic changes in South Africa all bear witness to the strength of civic action.

In the past five years, we have been consistently moving beyond the market-versus-state polarization of the cold war era. The narrow ideological alternative between market and state can now be recast to answer these questions: What kind of state? What kind of market? And, therefore, what kind of third sector?

## The Case for Global Civil Society

The prevailing global trends toward poverty and ecological imbalance cannot be reversed by actions undertaken only at the local and national levels. Regional coalitions and networks have recently been formed in many parts of the world to address specific themes and concerns such as protection of the environment; human rights; adult education; women, children, and indigenous peoples' rights; health and habitat issues, and so on. Networking has characterized the emergence of global civil society.

In contrast to the structures of governments and corporations, networks tend to operate horizontally. Their centers are everywhere, their peripheries nowhere. Their leaderships rotate. Their aim is not self-preservation, but to get a job done.

Networks adjust quickly to changing circumstances and may disappear when no longer needed.

Women have taken the lead in this process. For decades now they have been pursuing, with energy and consistency, an agenda that aims to eliminate all forms of gender-based discrimination. Action organanizations such as Amnesty International and Medicins sans Frontieres have been working on behalf of political prisoners and civilian victims of armed conflicts wherever human rights violations occur.

The People's Plan for the 21st Century (PP21) is a recent coalition-building example from the Asia-Pacific region. Cutting across social sectors, PP21 has built coalitions between women's groups, indigenous people, workers, human rights groups, and social activists to propose an alternative development paradigm.

On the global level, NGO networking and advocacy efforts have produced some landmark events. The most comprehensive and best planned of these processes was Rio's Global Forum and Earth Summit in June 1992. It is fair to say that at this United Nations conference, citizens not only educated the public on environmental issues but also—for the first time—insisted on a shared responsibility with states for the governance of the planet. Similar mobilization drives were carried out for the Vienna Human Rights Conference in 1993, the Cairo Population Conference in 1994, the World Summit for Social Development in 1995, and the Beijing World Conference on Women in 1995.

International associations of consumer groups are scrutinizing the affairs of the market, calling for greater transparency in the actions of multinationals, including the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund. For example, the International Organization of Consumers' Unions (IOCU), a global association for consumer organizations from more than 80 countries, has contributed significantly to ensuring greater public accountability of market enterprises.

The very fact that parts of the "North" are also facing unemployment, urban violence, drugs, AIDs, and environmental degradation opens up new opportunities for more horizontal international linkages between geographic areas and nations, transcending the old donor/donee and grant-maker/grant-seeker relationships

In Latin America, major players such as the Interamerican Development Bank, CIVICUS (the World Alliance for Citizen Participation), the Synergos Institute (an anti-poverty development organization), and the Ford, Interamerican, and Mott foundations have joined forces with national consortia of NGOs to implement a common action agenda in support of civil society. Governments are also being challenged to open up to new partnerships with citizen organizations to promote social development.

## Bold Action Needed

These emerging coalitions between civil society, state, and market are rooted in the realization that traditional approaches to alleviate poverty and underdevelopment need to be revised. Analysts realize that market mechanisms alone tend to increase the fragmentation of society, rather than close the gap between haves and have-nots. Governments, on the other hand, are confronted with diminishing revenues and increasingly are incapable of providing

basic social services for all.

Citizens and their organizations are, therefore, called upon to assume greater responsibility in addressing the needs of the community. But more than that, they monitor the efficiency of government-implemented policies, and they urge greater social involvement and accountability of the private sector.

The emergence of these new coalitions and networks confirms that the time is ripe to act boldly to strengthen citizen participation and civil society both at the national and global levels.

Global citizen participation is rising at a time marked by a sharp decline, especially in the North, of such traditional forms of political participation as voting, party affiliation, and labor union membership. While the struggle in the South is to extend newly gained democracy and citizenship to the economic and social spheres, the North is confronted with an increasing drift toward civic disaffection and apathy. There is a growing disillusionment with politics. Many citizens feel that they have lost control over the political and economic mechanisms that determine their lives.

Threatened by processes that seem beyond their understanding and capacity to influence, suffering from the alienation produced by global cultural homogenization, many react defensively by going back to ethnocentrism and parochialism. A renewal of the sense of concern and solidarity among citizens could be a powerful alternative to social fragmentation and the aggressive affirmation of ethnic or religious identities.

This sense of common belonging, however, cannot be sustained by ignoring differences in cultures, religions, languages, or ethnicity. Cutting across traditional boundaries of caste, class, religion, and nation-state, the option of global citizen action, rooted in a common set of values, implies the acknowledgement and acceptance of diversity as one of the most distinctive characteristics of humankind.

Issues of Democracy, USIA Electronic Journals, Vol. 1, No. 8, July 1996

# Need for Citizen Activism Greater Now than Ever

## *An Interview with Randa Slim*

Randa Slim is head of international civil society programs at the Kettering Foundation, a leading research institute that specializes in training leadership in civic organizations. In an interview with contributing editor David Pitts, Slim discusses the necessity for strong civil societies and a method to sustain them.

*Question:* How important is the civil society movement to the future of democracy?

*Slim*: The importance of strengthening citizenship to ensure not only the survival but the effectiveness of democracy cannot be underestimated. More and more people are realizing that a democratic political order does not guarantee a democratic society. They are coming to see that creating a democratic political society requires a responsible, active citizenry. Without it, recent social, political, and economic reforms achieved around the world will not exist for long.

Q: What are the main ways to encourage a more active citizenry?

A: A key vehicle is the town meeting where citizens come together to discuss issues of public policy. One way of organizing such meetings is what the Kettering Foundation calls deliberative issues forums. The objective of the forums is to engender a sense of purpose and direction that will enable citizens to act together—as a public rather than as individuals.

The deliberative methodology is widely used in the United States in the national

issues forums, a nationwide network of civic and educational organizations that includes libraries, womens' clubs, universities, public schools, literacy groups, churches, and seniors' groups, among others.

Each year, thousands of U.S. citizens gather in local communities to deliberate on three or four issues of pressing national concern. Participants talk about specific issues with the help of a moderator and suggestions from a nonpartisan issue book.

Q: Has this methodology also been practiced in other countries?

A: Civic and educational organizations in 16 countries in Latin America, Eastern and Central Europe, Russia, Central Asia, and the Middle East are currently using the deliberative methodology to engage citizens.

In some countries, the idea of deliberative forums is brand new, especially forums that feature a wide-ranging give-and-take without the adoption of rigid ideological positions.

In the Western hemisphere, organizations in five countries actively use the deliberative methodology. For example, in Argentina, the citizen groups Poder Ciudadano and Conciencia are developing a network of organizations that conduct forums throughout the country. An issue book on corruption, titled *Control de la Corrupcion,* was published in Argentina in 1995.

Some of the Conciencia volunteers have participated in the Kettering Foundation's training sessions on civil society, which include classes on the theory and practice of deliberative democracy, organizing grass-roots networks, and how to name and frame issues for public deliberation.

Q: Is it a two-way street? Do we learn from them?

A: Yes, of course. We have learned from them, particularly about the nature of the obstacles that confront the civil society movement in countries such as Argentina and Russia—the growing disengagement of citizens from the political process, disgust with the status quo, and in some cases a lack of awareness of the responsibilities and rights of active citizenship in a democracy.

Q: Can you give some more examples of the civil society movement in other countries?

A: Yes, elsewhere in Latin America, Participa, a Chilean civic group, conducts forums in communities around the country, many organized around the issue of how to reduce crime and violence.

Another example comes from Colombia where the Civic Education and Democratization program helps poor people develop citizenship skills.

The Latin America Democracy Network, which has received funding from the U.S. Agency for International Development, is particularly active in Chile, Colombia, Argentina, and Guatemala. This effort pools resources and skills to promote civic education and citizen participation in these countries and in the region. The five-year project—the first regional network of civic organizations as distinct from political networks—involves more than 60 organizations.

Similar efforts are underway all over the world. In Russia, the Russian Center for Citizenship Education is sponsoring forums around the country on issues relevant to that nation's developing democracy.

In Eastern Europe, the Eastern European Deliberative Network, begun by the Joint East European Center in Budapest, is sponsoring forums in that region.

I recently returned from Central Asia and was fascinated by the growth of nongovernmental organizations there. A lot of the growth is recent, thanks to funding largely from the United States and the European Union.

Q: Are these different networks connected?

A: The need for civic organizations to build networks and collaborative efforts is beginning to materialize on a worldwide scale. In 1995, civic and educational organizations from many countries formed the International Civil Society for Public Deliberation.

The aim of the consortium is to enhance international cooperation in promoting responsible democratic, and widely participatory, deliberation on public issues around the world.

This year, the consortium has identified four issues to focus on: increasing women's participation in the political decision-making process; school curricula reforms to enhance citizen participation; redesigning the relationship between government and citizenry; and increasing ethnic and minority group participation in public politics.

Members of the consortium and other organizations interested in starting issues forums are invited to attend the annual International Civil Society Workshop held each summer by the Kettering Foundation in Dayton, Ohio, and at Miami University in Oxford, Ohio.

Q: Some people think citizen meetings are a little old-fashioned in this electronic age. How useful is citizen activism at a time when even experts find it difficult to grasp complex public policy options?

A: The need for citizen activism is greater now than ever before. Governments can no longer afford to engage in a patron-client relationship with their citizens. The information revolution and technological innovations are fast turning us into a truly global village where citizens are no longer able to plead ignorance of the issues to justify disengagement from the political process. It simply cannot be left up to the experts.

Q: What obstacles do you see ahead for the civil society movement?

A: Reductions in public funding are the most serious threat to the survival of civic organizations. With an increasing number of governments confronted by pressures to reduce public spending, including the United States government which currently provides much of the public funding, civic organizations must become more enterprising in searching for private and local funding to fill the gap.

Q: How should they become more enterprising?

A: They must become more adept at forming mergers and cooperative agreements with other like-minded organizations to minimize costs and maximize results. Those that survive will be the organizations that make these kinds of transitions and that also consider for-profit as well as nonprofit activities.

For more information about the Kettering Foundation, call 513/434-7300 or fax to 513/439-9804.
The address is: 200 Commons Road
Dayton, Ohio 45459
USA

# The Importance of Civic Education

*by*

*Albert Shanker*

Albert Shanker is president of the 85,000-member American Federation of Teachers and is the founding president of Education International, a federation of some 20 million teachers from democratic countries around the world. In this article, he discusses the importance of civic education to the building of democracy and outlines some of the fundamentals he believes are essential to developing education-for-democracy curricula in the United States.



Countries around the world—those recently liberated from communism or some other form of dictatorship and those where democracy is well established—face an increasingly common question: What role can education play in building and strengthening democracy? The question may be equally important to those nations with no modern democratic tradition as it is to the more practical democracies.

For proof of concern for the health of democracy in the United States, one need only look to declining voter turnout, increasing cynicism toward political processes and institutions, recent bombings, including that of a government building, and at the titles of books published on these subjects in recent years: *The Disuniting of America, The Culture of Complaint, Democracy on Trial, The Twilight of Democracy,* and, ominously, *Before the Shooting Begins.*

When I espouse the importance of civic education to the building and

reinvigorating of democracy, I especially refer to the role that formal education can play. It is something our organization has been involved in for many years. Therefore, I would like to share a couple of experiences the American Federation of Teachers (AFT) has had in promoting education for democracy in the United States, in the hope that it will help others to identify and overcome some of the challenges newly democratic nations are likely to face—or may already be facing.

One challenge to sound education for democracy programs is posed by the contention that what matters in teaching democratic citizenship is the teaching of "critical thinking" skills, and little else. Closely related to this is the attitude that considers all curricular content to be equal, and champions the proposition that all that is required of students to be good citizens is that they "learn how to learn." Proponents of this position often argue that the pace of knowledge is expanding so rapidly, it quickly becomes "obsolete," and by extension, not worth learning.

We argue, on the contrary, that the central ideas, events, people and works that have shaped our world, for good or ill, are not at all obsolete. Instead, the quicker the pace of change, the more critical it will be for us to remember them and understand them well. We insist that absent this knowledge, citizens remain helpless to make wise judgments.

Unfortunately, the proponents of teaching skills and little else, offer a false dichotomy between "content" and "process." I do not wish to fall into that trap, so let me be clear: both are important. Of course, developing thinking skills is a major goal of education in democracy. How else can one make a wise choice between alternatives—whether it be taking a position on a political issue, deciding for whom to vote in an election, or avoiding the manipulative techniques used by some political figures—if one has not been equipped with and had practice in this area.

Nevertheless, content matters.

The impulse to teach skills over content, at least in the American case, can be traced back to the efforts of the Progressive Movement in education, which sought to reform what was at the time a very formal, content-based approach. Similarly, some civic educators in Eastern Europe and newly independent states seem to be neglecting the teaching of important material in reaction to the overly rigid and content-heavy approach that existed in the communist era.

There are some fundamentals that must be learned. At the AFT we argue that, at the very least, the content of American civic education should focus on three areas that answer the question: What must citizens of democracy know?

- First, citizens must know the fundamental ideas central to the political vision of the 18th-century enlightenment thinkers—the vision of democracy and human rights that inspires people of many diverse origins and cultures.
- Second, it is indispensable to know the facts of modern history, dating back at least to the English Revolution and forward to our own century's total wars; to the failure of the nascent liberal regimes of Russia, Italy, Germany, Spain, and Japan; to the totalitarianism, oppression, and mass extermination of our time. For many in Russia and Eastern Europe

the memories of the major crimes and petty humiliations inflicted by communism are still fresh. The imprisonments, fears of speaking freely, even the long lines for food and other goods are still remembered by those who experienced it. But how about their children? Who will remind them of the past and help them learn to love freedom?

- Finally, and related to this point, citizens need to understand the current condition of the world and how it got that way, and be prepared to act upon the challenges to democracy in our own day.

A second challenge that education for democracy programs face is posed by what in America goes by the name of "multiculturalism." I should be clear about what I mean when I use the term. As practiced by some, multiculturalism takes the shape of something approximating a new ideology of separatism. It challenges the idea of a common identity and rejects the possibility of a common set of values. The groups espousing multiculturalism claim "group rights" which would conflict with the notion of living in "a nation based on a firm core of commonly held values."

In multiethnic societies attempting to create or maintain democracy, this is especially troubling, as it encourages people to think of themselves not as individuals, but primarily in terms of their membership in groups. Excessive promotion of allegiance to groups, instead of to ideals such as democracy, human rights, and justice, encourages the breakdown of civil society. Signs of this breakdown are evident and range from troubled race relations in the United States to fighting in the Balkans.

In arguing against this type of multiculturalism, I do not want to imply that groups in America and other societies have not been treated badly. Nor that the historical record needs to be corrected to more accurately reflect the contributions of minorities to our societies. I also wish to make clear that I am in no way criticizing the type of multicultural education pursued by many European educators. These programs are aimed at creating increased tolerance, as opposed to other programs I have mentioned, which often promote increased intolerance by focusing on differences instead of commonalities.

Often, however, the claims of multiculturalists and other separatists reflect the attitude that no one group may make a judgment on any other, since all "depends on your point of view." This extremely relativistic viewpoint conflicts with the need that all societies have of establishing some basic values, guidelines, and beliefs. And, it should be pointed out that those who reject this claim are ironically making an absolute value of tolerance, for in its name they are unwilling to make any other value judgments.

This unwillingness to make value judgments about practices in our own societies or about those of others is a mistake. It can also be foolish. Some states that deny freedom of religion, speech, and conscience nonetheless define themselves as free. But we need not accept their Orwellian self-definitions as if words had no meaning. Were we to use some people's definition of freedom—government provision of a job, medical care, and ample food—many of history's slaves and today's prisoners would have to be called "free."

# Civic Journalism

## *An Antidote to Apathy?*

*by*

*Paul Malamud*

At a time when media coverage of political and social issues is often superficial and shallow, some newspapers are trying to make amends. They're getting involved in community affairs. In the following story, contributing editor Paul Malamud reports on the rationale of this involvement and some papers' experiences with listening to the community.

A new movement called "civic" or "public" journalism is sweeping through U.S. newsrooms. Journalists are being asked to spend more time listening to the problems of ordinary people, and trying to understand the basic forces underlying social change, rather than spending their time reporting only the day's political statements made by competing factions.

In addition—having tried to figure out what is wrong in their local communities—some newspapers are offering forums, even supporting civic action organizations where people can discuss solutions.

For example:

- In 1992, the Wilmington (Delaware) *News Journal* commissioned a poll to identify crucial issues for the state of Delaware. After reporting these issues, the newspaper called for meetings to identify barriers to economic growth. Following a

series of local meetings where such issues were explored by citizens, the paper helped sponsor a two-day "economic summit meeting" of 25 local business leaders. Those who attended the summit vowed to undertake actions that would improve the Delaware economy.

A summarizing report stated that the project's goal had been "to identify, gain citizen input on, and track key issues" and to "provide a forum in which economic issues" affecting ordinary people "could be discussed" frankly.

- In 1993, the Des Moines (Iowa) *Register* instructed all its news reporters to conduct at least four face-to-face interviews with ordinary citizens to find out what was on their minds. These interviews—which totalled 600—were supplemented by a telephone poll; and the results were published as a five-part series, "Voice of the People." The newspaper organized a public meeting to discuss the issues that had emerged, and has continued to organize meetings between citizens and newsroom staffs, in order to link its coverage more to the preoccupations of readers.
- In 1993 and '94, the Indianapolis (Indiana) *Star* commissioned a major poll on racial attitudes of citizens in the region and spent a week reporting on the results. The follow-up series of stories, according to a report on the project, "reflected citizen experience, rather than relying on expert opinion, a major departure for the newspaper." Subsequently, the *Star* sponsored a community forum to discuss racial attitudes, which drew 500 people, and planned several more follow-up forums.

  The goal was "to get members of the community talking about race relations issues." It was "not to advocate any specific action, but to encourage citizens of the community to seek solutions."

One impetus behind such projects is that newspaper readership in the United States is declining. Some journalists feel the best way to get people to read newspapers is to get them interested, and involved, in significant community issues.

The American news media have always struggled against political influence and governmental pressure—and have secured the constitutional right to report freely and impartially on all issues. To some, then, it seems a contradiction that some newspapers are now "getting involved" with local politics as quasi-actors rather than dispassionate observers.

However, proponents of "civic journalism" insist that the idea is not to advance a partisan political agenda; rather, the idea is to make news coverage less superficial and sensational—to provide a kind of communications matrix where ordinary people are able to articulate and acknowledge the issues that concern them. Frequently, the second stage is a kind of forum (possibly electronic in the form of an Internet "chat", or real-life meetings) to discuss ways to grapple with these problems.

Those involved, doubtless, would acknowledge that such newsroom trends have not brought an end to America's

many social problems. And, at worst, "civic journalism" practiced in this context can have the aura of a publicity stunt, or an attempt to give therapeutic expression to a public concern.

Nonetheless, Jay Rosen and Davis Merritt, Jr., in a series of papers, "Public Journalism: Theory and Practice," point out that in a nation segmented by race, class, and cultural barriers, and by a polity absorbed in the vicarious experience of television rather than community activity, "strategies to recapture readers will always be incomplete without another sort of strategy aimed at reengaging citizens in public affairs and the life of the community."

Journalists, they argue, must attempt to strengthen "civic culture" by helping citizens of a democracy realize that the "system" is "theirs"—"public property rather than the playground of insiders or political professionals."

Noting that the American press "exhibits an aggressive independence," Rosen adds that the worst "political threat" in a democracy may not be government interference, but public apathy and cynicism that causes ordinary citizens to turn inward to relatively secure lives—and distance themselves from community affairs.

The basis of "public journalism," Merritt adds, should be to provide "information relevant to the clarification of core values" and "write clearly about the competing beliefs and priorities that underlie each public problem…. The public journalist's newspaper," he adds, "would view a problem—public safety, for instance—not merely as an opportunity to report what is happening but as an obligation to promote a discourse that leads to solutions; to act as a conscientious citizen would act."

Noble words. Much of this has always been implicit in the best American journalism—which has often consisted of "muckraking"—exposing social or governmental evils, and urging that corrective action be taken. And, of course, public opinion polls and focus groups are nothing new—they've been a journalist's tool for years.

Nonetheless, in an age obsessed with superficial images—the antics of celebrities, and the latest scandals—a new focus on average people and their everyday concerns may well end up reinvigorating the press as well as civil society in America.

Issues of Democracy, USIA Electronic Journals, Vol. 1, No. 8, July 1996

# Bibliography


**Arnn, Larry**
"No Right to do Wrong: The Rediscovery of American Citizenship," *Policy Review,* no. 74, Fall, 1995, pp. 54-56.

**Astin, Alexander, Larry**
"The Cause of Citizenship," *Chronicles of Higher Education,* vol. 42, no. 6, October 6, 1995, pp. B1-B2.

**Barber, Benjamin R.**
*Jihad vs. McWorld: How Globalism and Tribalism are Re-Shaping the World,* New York, NY: Ballentine Books, 1996.

**Barber, Benjamin R.**
"Searching for Civil Society," *National Civic Review*, vol. 84, no. 2, Spring, 1995, pp. 114-118.

**Barber, Benjamin R., et al.**
"Teaching Democracy, Defining the Role of Public Education in a Civil Society," *Education Week*, vol. 14, no. 30, April 19, 1995, pp. 33-37.

**Bradley, Bill**
"America's Challenge: Revitalizing our National Community," *National Civic Review,* vol. 84, no. 2, Spring, 1995, pp. 94-100.

**Bradley, Bill**
"Toward Civic-Minded Media," *Media Studies Journal,* vol. 10, no. 1, Winter, 1996, pp. 39-40.

**Civnet**
Established by the U.S. Information Agency, in cooperation with several non-governmental organizations supporting civic education and civic participation. Civnet contains a vast cyberlibrary of text books, historical documents, lesson plans, bibliographies, and information on civil society, civic journalism, and civic educational programs.
*http://civnet.org/index.htm*

**Etzioni, Amitai**
*New Communitarian Thinking: Persons, Virtues, Institutions and Communities,* Charlottesville, VA: University Press of Virginia, 1995.

**Fallows, James**
*Breaking the News: How American Media Undermine Democracy,* New York, NY: Pantheon Books, 1996.

**Fukuyama, Francis**
*Trust: the New Foundations of Global Prosperity,* New York, NY: Free Press, 1995.

**Galston, William A.**
"Won't You be my Neighbor?" *American Prospect,* no. 26, May 1996, pp. 16-22.

**Hall, John A., Ed.**
*Civil Society: Theory, History, Comparison,* Cambridge, MA: Blackwell Publishers, 1995.

**Hibbing, John R., et al.**
"Civics is not Enough: Teaching Barbarics in K-12," *PS: Political Science & Politics,* vol 29, no. 1, March 1996, pp. 57-62.

**Kennon, Patrick.**
*The Twilight of Democracy,* New York, NY: Doubleday, 1995.

**Ladd, Everett C.**
*A Culture of Complaint: America's Growing Dissatisfaction with Government and Disillusionment with the American Dream,* Washington, DC: American Enterprise Institute for Public Policy Research, 1995.

**Lehman, Kay, et al.**
"Gender and Citizen Participation: Is There a Different Voice?" *American Journal of Political Science,* vol. 39, May 1995, pp. 267-293.

**Linz, Juan J.**
*Problems of Democratic Transition and Consolidation: Southern Europe, South America, and Post-Communist Europe,* Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995.

**Lipset, Seymour M.**
*Exceptionalism: The Persistence of an American Ideology,* New York, NY: W. W. Norton, 1995.

**Miller, David.**
"Citizenship and Pluralism," *Political Studies,* vol. 43, no. 3, September, 1995, pp. 432-450.

**Raadschelders, Jos C.**
"Rediscovering Citizenship: Historical and Contemporary Reflections," *Public Administration,* vol. 73, Issue 4, Winter, 1995, pp. 611-625.
.

**Rosen, Jay, Ed.**
"Rethinking Journalism, Rebuilding Civic Life," *National Civic Review,* vol. 85, no. 1, Winter-Spring 1996.

**Tibbitts, Felisa.**
"Notes from Abroad: Education for Citizenship," *Education Week,* Vol. 15, no. 18, January 24, 1996, pp. 29-31.

# Article Alert

## *What's New in Democracy and Human Rights*

**Abramson, Mark A. "First Teams" (Government Executive, vol. 28, no. 5, May 1996, pp. 53-58)**

Abramson examines the U.S. Information Agency's two-year-old Information Bureau as an example of team-based management that is replacing traditional hierarchical bureaucracies. The new team leaders are gradually learning how to cope with a broader array of tasks and a more limited amount of resources, Abramson observes. While there are still some problems that need to be worked out, the benefits of the new management style are beginning to show.

**Fallows, James. "Why Americans Hate the Media" (The Atlantic Monthly, vol. 277, no. 2, February 1996, pp. 45-64)**

In this seminal article, journalist James Fallows criticizes the superficiality and sensationalism of modern journalism, especially on network television, and urges his colleagues to take the time to report on the underlying social, cultural and economic trends that are shaping the future. Fallows criticizes his colleagues for distorting journalism in order to entertain the public and challenges them, asking: "If we don't respect what we're doing… why should anyone else?"

**Hart, Roderick P. "Easy Citizenship: Television's Curious Legacy" (The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science, vol. 546, July 1996, pp. 109-119)**

Hart argues that modern television, with its constant glut of news, public affairs and disaster reports, has given viewers a false sense of participating in the political and social sphere, and has removed for many citizens the incentive to participate in society, even exercising their right to vote. "All too often," the author posits, "this (visual) tumult creates in viewers a sense of activity rather than genuine civic involvement."

**Mathews, David. "Public Journalism and Public Deliberation" (National Civic Review, vol. 85, no. 1, Winter/Spring 1996, pp. 39-42)**

Mathews, president of the Kettering Foundation and a former U.S. Secretary of Health, Education, and Welfare, discusses the increasing need for, and meaning of, public journalism in a democratic society. He says that "public journalism means more than announcing the dates of forums or reporting on interesting comments from public meetings. It means reporting on the effects of public deliberation on people as well as explaining what deliberation is all about."

**Putnam, Robert D. "The Strange Disappearance of Civic America" (The American Prospect, no. 24, Winter 1996, pp. 34-48)**

Putnam, professor and director of the Center for International Affairs at Harvard University, looks at the decline of social capital and civic engagement following on his earlier thesis in "Bowling Alone: America's Declining Social Capital." He argues that the decline in community participation and social trust is not due to suburbanization, pressures of time and money, the changing role of women, the decline of the family, or generational effects—although all are important to a degree. The primary culprit, he argues, is television, and increased communications technology.

**Rosen, Jay. "Public Journalism Is a Challenge to You (Yes, You)" (National Civic Review, vol. 85, no. 1, Winter/Spring 1996, pp. 3-6)**

Rosen, who teaches journalism and directs the Project on Public Life and the Press at New York University, reports on the movement that has grown out of a concern that journalists play a more constructive role in public life. Rather than isolating themselves from the community and its institutions through fashionable cynicism, public journalists try to "improve the story a community tells about itself," Rosen explains. Doing this requires the media to look beyond the sensational story to long-term trends and community-based solutions. His article is the lead in this *Review* issue devoted to "Rethinking Journalism: Rebuilding Civic Life."

**Townsend, Kathleen Kennedy. "Don't Be an Idios: The Case For Participation in Public Life" (The Washington Monthly, vol. 28, no. 6, June 1996, pp. 33-36)**

"Democracy's promise was laid out for the Founding Fathers by the first democrats, the Greeks, who so valued public life that their word for idiot, IDIOS, meant a private person—one who did not engage in public affairs," writes Townsend, the Lieutenant Governor of the state of Maryland. She discusses the need for American citizens to participate in the process of governing rather than surrender their role in public life and blame government for its shortcomings. She finds a model for civic participation in reform efforts involving community policing and parent involvement in the public schools.

# Internet Sites

## *On Democracy and Human Rights Themes*

Please note that USIA assumes no responsibility for the content and availability of those non-USIA resources listed below which reside solely with the providers:

### Fundamental U.S. Documents

**U.S. Constitution**
http://www.usia.gov/HTML/consteng.html

**Français**
http://www.usia.gov/HTML/constfr.html

**Español**
http://www.usia.gov/HTML/constes.html

**Bill of Rights**
http://www.usia.gov/usa/aboutusa/billeng.htm

**Français**
http://www.usia.gov/usa/aboutusa/billfr.htm

**Español**
http://www.usia.gov/usa/aboutusa/billes.htm

**Declaration of Independence**
http://www.usia.gov/usa/aboutusa/deceng.htm

**Français**
http://www.usia.gov/usa/aboutusa/decfr.htm

**Español**
http://www.usia.gov/usa/aboutusa/deces.htm

**The Federalist Papers**
gopher://spinaltap.micro.umn.edu/11/Ebooks/By%20Title/Fedpap

### U.S. Government

**Executive Branch**
http://www.vote-smart.org/executive/

**Legislative Branch**
http://www.vote-smart.org/congress/

**U.S. Senate**
gopher://ftp.senate.gov

**U.S. House of Representatives**
http://www.house.gov

### Judicial Branch
http://www.vote-smart.org/judiciary/

### The Cabinet
gopher://198.80.36.82/11s/usa/politics/cabinet

## Related Sites

### Civnet
http://civnet.org/index.html

### Human Rights and Democracy
http://www.usia.gov/topical/rights/rights.htm

### U.S. Elections '96
http://www.usia.gov/elections/index.htm

#### Français
http://www.usia.gov/elections/frindex.htm

#### Español
http://www.usia.gov/elections/spindex.htm

### American Civil Liberties Union
http://www.aclu.org

### The Global Democracy Network
http://www.gdn.org/

### The Human Rights Gopher
gopher://gopher.humanrights.org:5000/1

### PeaceNet
http://www.peacenet.org/peacenet/